



Mr. Thomas J. Vilsack, Chair  
Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council  
500 Poydras Street  
Suite 1117  
New Orleans, LA 70130

Dear Chairman Vilsack,

Please find enclosed a resolution expressing the full support of the Bay County Chamber of Commerce to implement a Gulf of Mexico Estuary Program establishing one or more estuary programs for the comprehensive management, restoration, and protection of Northwest Florida Estuaries. The Bay County Chamber additionally requests that the Council designate the St. Andrew Bay System as a Gulf of Mexico Estuary Program on the initial funded priorities list.

This program will have direct impact on recreational/commercial fishing, will help to reduce flooding/property loss, will improve essential water quality and habitat.

Respectfully,

Carol Roberts  
President/CEO  
Bay County Chamber of Commerce



**A RESOLUTION OF THE BAY COUNTY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE EXPRESSING SUPPORT FOR THE GULF OF MEXICO ESTUARY PROGRAM THAT WILL ESTABLISH ONE OR MORE ESTUARY PROGRAMS FOR THE COMPREHENSIVE MANAGEMENT, RESTORATION, AND PROTECTION OF SIX NORTHWEST FLORIDA ESTUARIES; PROVIDING FOR TRANSMITTAL; PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE**

**WHEREAS**, Gulf of Mexico estuaries and their associated natural resources provide boating, fishing, hunting, tourism, and other outdoor recreational and economic opportunities for citizens and visitors of Florida; and

**WHEREAS**, mismanagement of Gulf of Mexico estuaries may exacerbate flooding and property loss, negatively impact water quality and estuarine habitat, negatively affect the local economy and tourism, and threaten the health, safety and welfare of Florida's citizens and visitors; and

**WHEREAS**, the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council, the United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) and the State of Florida are seeking funding to "stand up" and establish Estuary Programs in one or more Northwest Florida Estuaries, including Perdido, Pensacola, Escambia, Choctawhatchee, St. Andrew, and Apalachicola, in order to comprehensively coordinate the management and improvement of these estuaries and their natural resources; and

**WHEREAS**, elected officials, local, state and federal government staffs, the Nature Conservancy, citizens, academia, and other stakeholders from the Northwest Florida Estuaries have been actively participating in meetings for the past two years to identify and coordinate estuary management issues and efforts; and

**WHEREAS**, all involved stakeholders support the establishment of Estuary Programs for the six Northwest Florida Estuaries in order to comprehensively manage and improve water quality, habitat, natural resources, and economic benefits.

**NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, THAT THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE BAY COUNTY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE HEREBY EXPRESSES SUPPORT FOR THE GULF OF MEXICO ESTUARY PROGRAM (EPA\_RESTORE\_003\_008\_Cat1) THAT WILL ESTABLISH ONE OR MORE ESTUARY PROGRAMS FOR THE COMPREHENSIVE MANAGEMENT, RESTORATION, AND PROTECTION OF SIX NORTHWEST FLORIDA ESTUARIES INCLUDING PERDIDO, PENSACOLA, ESCAMBIA, CHOCTAWHATCHEE, ST. ANDREW, AND APALACHICOLA; AND, THAT THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE BAY COUNTY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE REQUESTS THAT THE GULF COAST ECOSYSTEM RESTORATION COUNCIL ALLOCATE FUNDING IN THE INITIAL FUNDED PRIORITIES LIST FOR TWO OR MORE ESTUARIES IN NORTHWEST FLORIDA; AND**

**THAT THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE BAY COUNTY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE REQUESTS THAT THE GULF COAST ECOSYSTEM RESTORATION COUNCIL DESIGNATE THE ST. ANDREW BAY SYSTEM AS A GULF OF MEXICO ESTUARY PROGRAM ON THE INITIAL FUNDED PRIORITIES LIST.**

THIS RESOLUTION SHALL BE EFFECTIVE UPON PASSAGE.

PASSED AND ADOPTED this 2<sup>nd</sup> day of January, 2017.



Claire Sherman, Chairman of the Board  
Bay County Chamber of Commerce



Carol Roberts, President/CEO  
Bay County Chamber of Commerce